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Study Abroad: Benefits, Concerns, Who Goes and Why?

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Abstract

The objective of the research is to investigate if certain demographics of students help explain four areas of potential improvements in predominantly short-term study abroad programs. These areas are motivation, experience enhancement, benefits from various learning activities, and students' concerns regarding their experience. Pre-trip and post-trip surveys were conducted using logistic regression model. Our results showed that participants of a longer-term program were more likely than those in the short-term program to be expanded in their cultural understanding and global outlook. In contrast to many studies, males were found to be more motivated than females by a desire to experience foreign culture. Students with a higher GPA were found to have a more enhanced academic experience than those with a lower GPA. Finally, participants from a monocultural background were found to have a more culturally enhanced experience than the multicultural ones. The results will help improve the quality of study abroad programs.

Keywords:

Study abroad, intercultural education, motivation, enhanced cultural experience, student demographics

Introduction

In the last quarter of a century, there has been an exponential increase in the volume of American students who travelled abroad to study.

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Approximately 350,000 students had studied abroad in 2018-2019, which represented an annual growth of 1.6 percent (Institute of International Education, 2020). During the same time, approximately 65% of study abroad programs consisted of short-term in 8 weeks or less (Open Doors, 2020). As of 2016, 24 states passed international education resolutions to promote study abroad in colleges (NAFSA, personal communication, March 8, 2021).

The purpose of a study abroad program is to promote global competence (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Fine & McNamara, 2011; Tarchi & Surian, 2021), cross cultural understanding (Hill, 2006; Kitsantas & Meyer, 2001), cultural immersion, and world-mindedness (Fairchild et al., 2009; Kitsantas, 2004). There are many beneficial outcomes gained from studying abroad. These outcomes include improved global perspective or global awareness (Kurt et al., 2013), even self-awareness (Gaia, 2015); and a new interest in foreign cultures that affect viewpoints regarding political issues, history, travel, and foreign languages (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Goldoni, 2013; Koernig, 2007).

In this study, we will examine the participants' motivation, experience enhancement, concerns, and benefits gained from various learning activities in the study abroad program. We will study participants' responses prior to and after their study abroad experience. We then test some key hypotheses based on previous literature reviews, to be followed by some institutional policy implications.

Literature Review

Goals and Benefits

American colleges are emphasizing the need for diversity or global education (Gow-Hogge, 2020; Kuh, 2008; Niehaus et al., 2019; Tarchi & Surian, 2021). Some studies promote the belief that intercultural education through study abroad is one way of preparing students to become global citizens (Tarrant, 2010). In a worldwide survey, 56% of multinational companies were expected to increase their short-term international assignments (Frith, 2015). According to this survey, "the top five drivers behind international assignments were to 'provide specific technical skills not available locally' (47%), to ensure 'know-how transfer' (43%), to provide 'specific managerial skills' (41%), to facilitate 'career management and leadership development' (41%) and fulfil 'specific project needs' (40%)". The report further identified such short-term

international assignments had been increasingly filled by those 35 years and younger. More recently, PricewaterhouseCoopers (2020) looked for a 50% increase in international assignments for their workers by 2020. Companies provide little to no training for oversea assignments, so it is the task of the university to prepare the future employees. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International emphasized the importance of preparing students to seek knowledge through global experience and studying abroad because they lead to a positive impact that business schools have globally (AACSB International, 2018).

Moreover, an increasing number of students believe that studying abroad will make themselves more employable or enhance their career prospects (Beerkens et al., 2016; Franklin, 2010; Stroud, 2010). For instance, agricultural and natural resources employers have expressed a need for employees with interpersonal communication and leadership skills (Crawford et al., 2011; Harder et al., 2015). According to Norris and Gillespie (2005), the long-term effects of a short-term study abroad program on students have positively impacted their careers. In order to gain the most out of the study abroad experience, Dwyer and Peters (2019) encouraged students to acquire an internship in the host country. They found 70% of the students on an internship while abroad stated that the experience had "ignited" their career interests.

Program Duration

As mentioned earlier, short-term study abroad trips have gained popularity with almost 65% of all students who study abroad doing a short-term trip (Open Doors, 2020). Since most students are unable to commit the time or money for long-term study abroad programs, most universities are offering a short-term study abroad program to overcome this type of obstacle (Arenson, 2003; Koernig, 2007). Another reason for its popularity is due to the inclusion of non-traditional students who may not have a chance to take a full-time study abroad trip (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2009; Peppas, 2005).

Motivation

According to the Forum on Education Abroad (2017), 89% of U.S. institutions were actively attempting to send more students abroad each year, and 56% had succeeded in doing so. Recently, institutions like California State University-Maritime (Kamdar & Lewis, 2015), and 4-year private colleges such as Goucher

College (n.d.), Soka University of America (n.d.), and Susquehanna University (n.d.) have made studying abroad mandatory for their students. In such instances, the students' potential motivation to study abroad could be one of fulfilling their major or degree requirement.

A large body of literature has highlighted the benefits of globalization and increased intercultural connectedness (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Fairchild et al., 2009; Fine & McNamara, 2011; Gaia, 2015; Goldoni, 2013; Gow-Hogge, 2020; Kurt et al., 2013; Niehaus et al., 2019; Tarchi & Surian, 2021). Other major motivating factors for students in "Western countries" such as the United States to travel abroad are the ability to gain international experiences, develop personally, and gain a competitive advantage in the labor market (Beerkens et al., 2016; Findlay & King, 2010; Partlo & Ampaw, 2018). Anderson and Lawton (2015) examined the students' motivation to travel abroad and whether they had received any intercultural development from their experience. They found most students were traveling for world enlightenment and personal growth, and not many were traveling for "entertainment".

Experience Enhancement

According to Anderson et al. (2006), the Office of Study Abroad at Michigan State University has identified four areas of improvement for study abroad programs. These areas are academic/intellectual, professional, personal, and intercultural. Many U.S. college students have shown positive change after returning home from a study abroad trip. Hadis (2005) studied the post-trip gain in academics, his results showing that the intrinsic value of education, independence, and global-mindedness explained the positive shift in the students' academic priorities after studying abroad. Educators have also noticed an increase of curiosity and interest in academic matters that result in students not caring solely about their grades and caring more about learning the material (Hadis, 2005). Some studies found students' listening and comprehension abilities have improved after their studying abroad experience (Jones & Bond 2000; Rivers, 1998). Ash et al. (2003) particularly found course comprehension was greatly increased among students who participated in courses that focus on service-learning activities and interaction with related professionals.

Landis and Bhagat (1996) postulated that as the world has become more globalized, intercultural sensitivity will play an essential role in the new

culturally diverse workforce reflecting ever increasing international cooperation and intercultural interaction. Anderson et al. (2006) measured the impact of short-term faculty-led study abroad programs on the student's acceptance of other cultures. They found that students were less likely to view their home country as superior compared to another (less ethnocentric), and that students may adopt or accept cultural differences to a greater extent. The expectation of a study abroad program plays a vital role in students' evaluations of and adaptations to intercultural experiences (Martin et al., 1995). According to Goldstein and Kim (2005), the less ethnocentric the participants, the more likely they were to develop a favorable and realistic expectations regarding their study abroad programs. A student with a high level of ethnocentrism will hinder his/her understanding of other cultures (Barbuto et al., 2015; Wiseman et al., 1989). Moreover, study abroad experiences create global leaders that are more respectful to another culture's social, political, and economic systems (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

Benefits from Various Course Components

In Peppas' seven years of study (2005), his participants ranked his five major course components in this order: onsite-visits, research project and paper, class instruction, reflective journal, and free time abroad. Students need to be prepared before the trip so they can assimilate into their new environment quickly. For a short-term study abroad program, many studies recommended holding multiple pre-trip orientations to reduce student anxiety, set expectations, inform about the details of the trip, assign readings, and get students to know each other and interact with their faculty leading the trip (Koernig, 2007; Manspeaker & Wallace, 2019; Medora & Roy, 2017; Sachau et al., 2010). Some other activities may include group presentations and discussions about the trip (Koernig, 2007), an overview of the host country's cultural differences, and even to run some fundraising activities with the students to help lower their costs (Medora & Roy, 2017). More recently, Hanada (2019) found predeparture orientations among others have a significant impact on the development of intercultural competency among study abroad participants.

As far as the course structure is concerned, it is essential to balance between classroom instruction and site visits. Duke (2000) suggested putting a higher emphasis on experiencing culture and a lower emphasis on testing. According to him, exams and papers are great to use before and after the trip

but not during it since they will stress the students and prevent them from fully experiencing the culture around them (Duke, 2000). Sachau et al. (2010) suggested treating traditional lectures as a sideline activity, though they are not opposed to assessing learning with tests. According to Kamdar and Lewis (2015), all study abroad trips should be assessed since the data will be important to improve future study abroad trips. Duke (2000) suggested projects can be useful to create a team mentality among the students, some having suggested creating a research project or requiring students to give presentations on an issue related to the host country (Kamdar & Lewis, 2015; Manspeaker & Wallace, 2019). This will compel the students to engage their social surroundings more with such activities as exploring museums and interviewing the locals. The post-trip reinforcement is essential for the students to retain the knowledge they gained (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). The students need to be debriefed and reflect on their experiences after returning home. Upon their return, many schools required their students to write a reflective essay (Kamdar & Lewis, 2015), complete a final project or research paper (Koernig, 2007; Peppas, 2005), or even deliver presentations at the home institutions to promote the study abroad program (Shibata, 2019).

There are numerous studies that provide excellent suggestions for journal assignments (Duke, 2000; Moncrief et al., 1995; Varner & Peck, 2003). According to Duke (2000), journal writing will enhance group discussions and personalize students' experiences. Writing also solidifies their experiences and increases their involvement. Duke (2000) introduced a more directed journal writing activity known as "treasure hunting" that makes students actively seek for specific items that they might not have found without guidance. Sachau et al. (2010) suggested assigning journal writings for the purpose of reflections on the local culture, customs, people, and events. In another study, the students kept notes on daily reflections and gave presentations to each of the host institutions they visited (Shibata, 2019). As for company visits, some recommended visiting local business organizations or inviting their personnel to classrooms while in the host countries to reflect on the differences in business operations (Duke, 2000; Koernig, 2007; Sachau et al., 2010). Since company tours can be an effective way to demonstrate to students the foreign business practices, Koernig (2007) suggested using informal discussions while taking the tour on the factory floor or in a conference room, and for students to interact with other students in the same field in the host country. Several researchers suggested allowing free time

for independent travel in the host country as it can be an essential part of the student growth process (Manspeaker & Wallace, 2019; Sachau et al., 2010; Shibata, 2019).

Concerns

It is entirely natural for students who participate in the study abroad trip to express various concerns before the departure. Some participants may not be completely comfortable with the non-traditional class structure inherent in a study abroad program. According to Perry et al. (2012), adding a hands-on experience can add further meaning to the learning process. By putting the students through challenging problem-solving situations in a non-traditional way, it puts the students outside their comfort zone, which can lead to transformative learning. On the other hand, intercultural communication may create stress and anxiety for the person traveling to places where unfamiliar cultures dominate the environment (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998). According to Koernig (2007), one of the main concerns among the students are language barriers in the host country and not having enough time to experience the culture of the country. To overcome this concern, for instance, students in a short-term trip to Japan were given the opportunity to dine with the Japanese students. This allowed them to adjust their communication skills by speaking more slowly, using body language, and using different vocabularies (Shibata, 2019). According to Hembroff and Rusz (1993), when students are interested in a language, they tend to want to get a deeper understanding of the culture of the language.

According to Sachau et al. (2010), housing is one aspect of the trip that impacts the mood of the students directly. They favored homestays over a traditional dorm living space as the former will provide more cultural immersion through staying with a local family (Basow & Gaugler, 2017). Students should also be warned about the traveling situation. There might be a lot of walking, or the students may be required to use public transportation (Bain & Yaklin, 2019). In cases such as the situation in Japan for instance, the main source of travel was through public transportation (Shibata, 2019). Koernig (2007) suggested upon arrival at the host country, the leading faculty would do well to acclimate the students to their new environment by showing them how to use the public transport systems, even do a scavenger hunt to keep everyone engaged.

Methodology and Data

Methodology

In this section, we will explain the derivation of our four hypotheses. Firstly, as short-term study abroad trips become increasingly popular so does the scrutiny of the effectiveness of meeting the academic goals. There were numerous studies that advocate for shorter term study abroad programs (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Loh et al., 2011; Norris & Gillespie, 2009), while others advocate for longer term study abroad programs (Kehl & Morris, 2007; McKeown, 2009; Zarnick, 2010). Study abroad was traditionally offered as a semester to a year in length. Some are skeptical if the shorter length trips such as those less than a semester long are effective in broadening a student's global-mindedness since the traditional length study abroad trips have a longer-lasting impact on the students (Dwyer, 2004). The duration of the trip was also found to impact the cultural intelligence (Nguyen et al., 2018), the intercultural competency (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012), and the intercultural sensitivity (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004) of the participants. Dwyer and Peters (2019) believed that the longer the students study abroad, the better the impact of their study abroad will be; for instance, the participants who studied in a foreign country for over a year are more likely to use a foreign language daily than students who study abroad short term. Zorn (1996) found the longer length of the study abroad program the greater the effect on the students' global perspective. Likewise, Kehl and Morris (2007) found the global-mindedness scores were higher among students who have traveled abroad for more than eight weeks verses students who have traveled for less than eight weeks (short-term program). Based on the above, we form the following hypothesis:

> H_1: Participants in the longer program are more likely than those in the short-term program to have an enhanced global and cultural experience.

Secondly, numerous studies have found women to be consistently more likely than men to study abroad (Fischer, 2012; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Open Doors, 2019; Salisbury et al., 2010; Stroud, 2010). While women were 2.4 times more likely to travel than men (Open Doors, 2019), Stroud (2010) found gender affects the students' intent on studying abroad. According to Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2015), women were 87% more likely than men to indicate interest in study abroad upon entering college. Anderson and Lawton (2015) found that male students scored lower than females in motivation to travel for world

enlightenment and personal growth. However, there was no significant difference between males and females in travel for career development and entertainment. Similar effects on the intentions of studying abroad that promote global-mindedness are confirmed in other studies (Milstein, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2018; Willard-Holt, 2001). Based on the above, we construct the following:

> H_2: The female participants are more likely than males to have an enhanced cultural experience.

Thirdly, studies have shown that students with higher levels of academic achievement are more likely to study abroad (Kim & Lawrence, 2021; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Paus & Robinson, 2008; Salisbury et al., 2010; Salisbury et al., 2011; Stroud, 2010; Whatley, 2017). Whatley (2017) found that before learning abroad, study abroad students had higher GPAs than non-study abroad students. Stroud (2015) reported that GPA is one influential predictor of the intention to participate in a study abroad program. Kim and Lawrence (2021) used college students' first year GPA as one of the attributes and found that GPA has a positive effect on participation in study abroad. Similarly, from a 2007 senior survey, Paus and Robinson (2008) found 50% of students with a GPA in the A-range studied abroad while students in the B-range was slightly above 20%. Statistically, a one-point increase on a GPA four-point scale would lead to a 20% to 30% increase in the student's likeliness to study abroad. Further, students with high GPAs are more likely to study abroad to learn more about the world and increase their general knowledge (Hadis, 2005). Based on the above, we hypothesize as follow:

> H_3: Participants with a higher GPA are more likely than those with a lower GPA to have an enhanced academic experience.

Fourthly, Nguyen et al. (2018) compared both monocultural and multicultural students and looked at the self-efficacy, cultural intelligence, and their adjustments while abroad. They found that the post-study self-efficacy and cultural intelligence were higher among monocultural students than for multicultural ones. A monocultural person may know well about one specific culture but may have a minimal level of exposure to or knowledge of other cultures. As such, his/her cultural intelligence to other cultures prior to a study abroad experience could be low (Iskhakova et al., 2021). On the other hand, a multicultural person is identified with more than one culture (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007) though not all non-Caucasian Americans are multicultural and

not all Caucasian Americans are monocultural. The experience encountered by monocultural persons while abroad may be quite different from that of the multicultural ones. For instance, due to a lack of the knowledge about an alien culture, monocultural persons tended to experience more culture shock than their multicultural counterparts did (Oberg, 1960). A more significant culture shock thus enhances more cultural experience to this group of participants from a study abroad program. Multicultural persons were more aware of multiple cultural perspectives (Selmer & Lam, 2004; Sussman, 2000) and they tended to adapt effectively in cross-cultural settings, being more culturally competent (Hong, 2010; Milstein, 2005; Thomas et al., 2010). Further, having experienced life as a minority group, the stress of dealing with another culture may be less for the multicultural persons than for the monocultural ones (Volpone et al., 2018). We thus hypothesize the following:

> H_4: The multicultural participants are less likely than the monocultural ones to experience an enhanced cultural experience.

Data

Two surveys were designed and conducted on student participants of various study abroad groups over two academic years. They were conducted anonymously online using Qualtrics. The pre-trip surveys were emailed from Qualtrics in late spring of 2018 and again in late spring of 2019, and the post-trip surveys were emailed in the summer of 2018 and again in the summer of 2019. The response rate was 71% and 63%, respectively. The final usable samples received were 56 and 37, respectively. The data was analyzed using the logistic regression model. The dependent variables are constructs of four areas of improvements -- motivations, experience enhancements, concerns, and benefits gained from various learning activities. The independent variables are geographical region, term duration, demographics of students such as classification, discipline, GPA, age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, foreign language proficiency, employment status, whether they have applied for a passport for the trip, if they have travelled previously outside the country, and the length of time since they last travelled abroad. The pre-trip survey covered the following countries: France, Germany, United Kingdom, Belize, Mexico, South Korea, and China. The post-trip survey covered the same countries plus Ireland but excluding China. Table (1) shows the frequency breakdown of these variables. Out of all the participants, 45% travelled to Central America, and 93%

of the trips were short-term between 2 to 4 weeks. 85% of the students were junior or senior, and 39% of them were in a business discipline. 73% of them had a GPA above 3.0, 68% of them were between 21 to 25 years old, 69% of them were female, 90% were single. There were equal numbers of Caucasian and African American participants (32%), 60% of the participants spoke no language other than English, 52% were part-time workers, 60% had to apply for passports for the trip, 55% had previously travelled outside the U.S., and of those who had travelled outside the U.S., 68% had done so in the previous five years.

Table (1): Variables used in Study Abroad Pre-trip (n=56) and Post-trip (n=37)

	Pre-Trip		Post-Trip	
	Total	**Percentage**	**Total**	**Percentage**
Destination Region				
Europe	19	33.9	12	32.4
N & Central America	25	44.6	17	46
Asia	12	21.4	8	21.6
Duration of Study Abroad				
2-4 Weeks	52	92.9	31	83.8
1-3 Months	4	7.1	5	13.5
3-6 Months	0	0	1	2.7
Student Classification				
Graduate Student	2	3.6	3	8.1
Senior	25	44.6	18	48.7
Junior	23	41.1	14	37.8
Sophomore	4	7.1	1	2.7
Freshman	2	3.6	1	2.7
Discipline				
Business	23	41.1	13	35.1
Education	20	35.7	12	32.4
Arts & Sciences	11	19.6	12	32.4
Health Sciences	2	3.6	0	0
Graduate Studies	0	0	0	0
Overall GPA				
3.51-4.00	23	41.1	17	46
3.01-3.50	18	32.1	9	24.3
2.51-3.00	9	16.1	6	16.2
2.00-2.50	6	10.7	5	13.5
Gender				
Male	17	30.4	12	32.4
Female	39	69.6	25	67.6
Marital Status				

Single	51	91.1	32	86.5
Married	3	5.4	3	8.1
Divorced, Widowed & Others	2	3.6	2	5.4
Age Group				
Less than 21 years old	11	19.6	5	13.5
21-25 years old	38	67.9	26	70.3
More than 25 years old	7	12.5	6	16.2
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	18	32.1	12	32.4
African American	18	32.1	11	29.7
Hispanic	10	17.9	6	16.2
American Indian, Multi-racial & Asian	10	17.9	8	21.6
Foreign Language				
None	36	64.3	27	73
Spanish	14	25	6	16.2
German, French & Others	6	10.7	4	10.8
Employment Status				
Part-time	29	51.8	5	13.5
Full-time Student	23	41.1	18	48.7
Full-time	4	7.1	14	37.8
Applied for new passport for the trip				
Yes	35	62.5	22	59.5
No	21	37.5	15	40.5
Traveled previously outside the U.S.				
Yes	31	55.4	16	43.2
No	25	44.6	21	56.8
Length of time since traveled abroad				
Last 5 years	21	67.7	12	75
More than 5 years ago	10	32.3	4	25

Results

Motivation

Based on previous literature review (Beerkens et al., 2016; Findlay & King, 2010; Franklin, 2010; Kamdar & Lewis, 2015; Partlo & Ampaw, 2018; Stroud, 2010), five motivational statements were constructed as follows: “It is required for my major or concentration”, “I’d like to experience the culture of another country”, “I’d like to make myself more employable after returning”, “It is an opportunity for personal development and growth”, “I’d like to learn the business practices/operations of another country”, and “other, please specify”.

The respondents were asked to rank their motivations for participation in the study abroad trip before the trip.

The pre-trip results show that respondents with a GPA above 2.5 were more motivated than those with a lower GPA by their academic major's requirement to participate in the study abroad program (see Table 2). Among those participated in a short-term 2-4 weeks program (vs. 1-3 months), males, and Hispanics (vs. African Americans) were more motivated by a desire to experience culture in another country. The Caucasian students (vs. African Americans) were less motivated by the prospects of being more employable upon return. Further, the business students (vs. arts and sciences students), and the Caucasians were also more motivated by the opportunity for personal development and growth, in contrast to those with a GPA between 2.51 and 3.00 (vs. GPA<2.5). Among those destined for Europe (vs. Asia), the married, the single (vs. divorced and widowed), the Hispanics, the English only speakers, and the Spanish speakers (vs. German, French, and others) were all less motivated by a desire to learn the business practices of another country.

TABLE (2): Results for Motivation

	Pre-trip			Post-trip		
	Estimate	**Std. Error**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**Std. Error**	**p-value**
Major requirement						
GPA 2.51 - 3.0	2.0354*	0.9436	0.0310			
GPA 3.01 - 3.5	1.7443*	0.8667	0.0442			
GPA 3.51 - 4.0	2.3218**	0.8494	0.0063			
Foreign language - Spanish				-2.9885*	1.4320	0.0368
Cultural experience						
Short-term 2 - 4 weeks	16.4100***	0.1396	<0.0000			
GPA 3.01 - 3.5				-2.0589	1.1370	0.0702
Male	1.2100*	0.5799	0.0370	1.3683*	0.6639	0.0393
Married				16.0400***	0.8280	<0.0000
Single				16.4300***	0.4671	<0.0000
White				1.5200	0.8651	0.0789
Hispanic	1.2632	0.7422	0.0888			
Employability						
White	-1.0847	0.6355	0.0879			
Personal development and growth						
GPA 2.51 - 3.0	-1.6912	0.9339	0.0702			
Business Administration	1.3311*	0.6584	0.0432			
White	1.0448	0.6126	0.0881			
New passport applicant				-1.1220	0.6764	0.0972
Learning foreign business practice						
Europe	-2.4212**	0.7653	0.0016			
Central America				-1.3483	0.8075	0.0950
Business Administration				-1.5708	0.8213	0.0558
GPA 2.51 - 3.00				2.7792*	1.2178	0.0225
GPA 3.01 - 3.50				1.8388	1.0607	0.0830

GPA 3.51 - 4.00				2.0982*	0.9769	0.0317
Less than 21 years old				1.9494*	0.9461	0.0394
Married	-3.7072	1.9130	0.0526			
Single	-4.2204*	1.6470	0.0104			
Hispanic	-1.3321	0.7414	0.0724			
American Indian, multi-racial, & Asian				1.8852*	0.9403	0.0450
Foreign language - None	-2.4260*	0.9765	0.0130			
Foreign language - Spanish	-3.4550**	1.0657	0.0012			
Part-time worker				-1.9783	1.1181	0.0769

Note: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.010$, * $p \leq 0.050$.

Having completed the study abroad course, students were asked to rank the same five motivational statements that were asked during the pre-trip survey. Our post-trip results show that Spanish speakers were less likely to list the requirement of their major as their motivation to participate in the program. Further, the males, the Caucasians, the married, and the single (vs. divorced and widowed) were more likely to cite having experienced the culture of another country, contrary to those with a GPA between 3.01 and 3.5 (vs. GPA<2.5). Interestingly, participants who had to apply for a passport for the trip (vs. those who needed not do so) were less likely to report being motivated by personal development and growth. Moreover, participants with a GPA above 2.5, those who were younger than 21 years old (vs. 20-25 years), the American Indians, multi-racial, and Asians were all more likely to state that they have learned business practices of another country, in contrast to participants who returned from Central America, business students, and part-time workers (vs. full time workers) who were less likely to indicate so

Experience Enhancement

Based on the work of Anderson et al. (2006), four areas of experience enhancement were constructed as follows: "academic/intellectual – problem solving and language skills, geographical and historical knowledge", "professional – professional contacts, a sense of direction for future career choices, a sense of responsibility", "personal – an appreciation for the U.S., personal identity, flexibility, independence, etc.", "intercultural – interest in other cultures, diminished ethnocentrism, language skills, cultural sensitivity", and "other, please specify". The respondents were asked to rank the areas in which they expected to have more or less enhanced experience prior to their study abroad trip.

The pre-trip results show that both full-time students and part-time workers (vs. full-time workers) expected to have a more enhanced academic experience, in contrast to the Caucasian students (vs. African Americans), who expected to have a less enhanced experience in this area (see Table 3). Moreover, graduate students (vs. freshmen), students with Health Science majors, full-time students (vs. full time workers), and those who have travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous 5 years (vs. within the previous 5 years) -- all expected to have a more enhanced professional experience; whereas participants of a short-term 2-4 week program (vs. 3-6 months), all the classmen above freshmen, those from the business disciplines (vs. arts and sciences), the Hispanics, the Caucasians, and Spanish speakers (vs. German, French, and others), all expected to have a less enhanced professional experience. Moreover, the sophomores, and all ethnic groups – the Caucasians, the Hispanics, the American Indians, multi-racial, and Asians expected to have a more enhanced personal experience from the study abroad trip. Finally, the American Indians, multi-racial, and Asians, and the full-time students, expected to have a less enhanced cultural experience.

TABLE (3): Results for Experience Enhancement

	Pre-trip			Post-trip		
	Estimate	**Std. Error**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**Std. Error**	**p-value**
Academic/intellectual enhancement						
GPA 2.51 - 3.00				1.9079	1.1222	0.0891
White	-1.4951*	0.6527	0.0220			
Full-time student	1.8865	1.0090	0.0615			
Part-time worker	1.6467	0.9892	0.0960			
Travelled outside US beyond last 5 years				-2.8904*	1.3642	0.0341
Professional enhancement						
Short-term 2 - 4 weeks	-16.9300***	0.1925	<0.0000			
Graduate student	0.0000***	0.0000	<0.0000	-12.1400***	0.9235	<0.0000
Senior	-17.1500***	0.3908	<0.0000	-13.2200***	0.4876	<0.0000
Junior	-16.8400***	0.4042	<0.0000	-13.5200***	0.4812	<0.0000
Sophomore	-17.1500***	0.7694	<0.0000	-37.1300***	0.0000	<0.0000
Business Administration	-1.3304	0.7354	0.0704			
Health science	15.5852***	0.0000	<0.0000			
White	-1.4346*	0.6856	0.0364			
Hispanic	-2.8939***	0.7964	0.0003			
Foreign language - Spanish	-1.9543*	0.9871	0.0477			
Full time student	1.8155	0.9874	0.0660			
Travelled outside US beyond last 5 years	1.5674*	0.7919	0.0478			
Personal enhancement						
Longer term 3 - 6 Months				17.9524***	0.0000	<0.0000
Sophomore	3.0355	1.6650	0.0682			
White	2.3270**	0.7043	0.0010			
Hispanic	3.7682***	0.9020	0.0000	2.5286*	1.0593	0.0170
American Indian, multi-racial, & Asian	1.9335*	0.7812	0.0133			

Intercultural enhancement						
Longer term 3 - 6 Months				-16.9715***	0.0000	<0.0000
Graduate student				16.5700***	0.8262	<0.0000
Senior				17.0000***	0.5037	<0.0000
Junior				17.5100***	0.5480	<0.0000
Sophomore				18.3700***	1.2446	<0.0000
Married				15.5100***	0.8963	<0.0000
Single				16.3600***	0.5046	<0.0000
Hispanic				-2.4915*	1.2392	0.0444
American Indian, multi-racial, & Asian	-1.9717*	0.8941	0.0274	-1.5598	0.8957	0.0816
Full-time student	-1.8103	0.9991	0.0700			

Note: *** p ≤ 0.001, ** p ≤ 0.010, * p ≤ 0.050.

Having participated in the study abroad experience, students were asked to rank the same four areas in which they had an enhanced experience. In the post-trip experience, participants with a GPA between 2.51 to 3.0 (vs. GPA<2.5) reported having a more enhanced academic and intellectual experience, in contrast to those who had travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous 5 years (vs. within the previous 5 years), who stated that they had a less enhanced academic experience. Relative to the freshmen, graduate students and all undergraduate classmen above freshmen cited having a more enhanced cultural experience but a less enhanced professional experience. On the other hand, and interestingly, both participants who were in the longer term 3-6 month program (vs. 1-3 months) and the Hispanics stated having a more enhanced personal experience but a less enhanced cultural experience. In addition, it is interesting that both the married and the single (vs. divorced and widowed) cited having a more enhanced cultural experience, in contrast to the American Indians, multi-racial, and Asians, who stated having a less enhanced cultural experience.

Benefits from Learning Activities

Based on previous studies (Duke, 2000; Kamdar & Lewis, 2015; Koernig, 2007; Manspeaker & Wallace, 2019; Medora & Roy, 2017; Peppas, 2005; Sachau et al., 2010; Shibata, 2019) on recommendations to faculty for study abroad curricula, regarding trip planning and management, six learning activities or course components were constructed as follows: pre-trip orientation, class instruction, journal writing, project presentation, company visits, free time abroad, and others. We asked participants to rank them according to whether they expected to benefit from them prior to the trip.

The pre-trip results show that the Hispanics (vs. African Americans), and participants who have previously travelled outside the U.S. (vs. those who have not) expected to benefit more from the pre-trip orientation, whereas participants with a GPA between 3.01 to 3.5 (vs. GPA<2.5) expected to benefit less from the same activity (see Table 4). In addition, participants who destined for Europe and Central America (vs. Asia), the Hispanics, and the Spanish speakers (vs. German, French, and others) expected to benefit more from classroom instruction. In terms of journal writing, the education majors (vs. arts & sciences), and those who have previously travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous 5 years (vs. within the previous 5 years) expected to benefit less than their counterparts, in contrast to the Hispanics, who expected to benefit more from the activity. The business majors (vs. arts & sciences) expected to benefit more from project presentation but less from company visits. Full time students (vs. full time workers) expected to benefit more from company visits whereas those destined for Europe, participants in the 2-4 weeks short-term program (vs. 1-3 months), and the Hispanics expected to benefit less from it. Finally, participants destined for Central America, those with education majors, and participants with a GPA between 3.01 to 3.50 expected to benefit more from having free time abroad.

TABLE (4): Results for Benefits from Course Components

	Pre-trip			Post-trip		
	Estimate	**Std. Error**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**Std. Error**	**p-value**
Pre-trip orientation						
GPA 3.01 - 3.50	-1.4880	0.8439	0.0779			
White				2.0914**	0.8108	0.0099
Hispanic	1.4274*	0.7173	0.0466	3.9244**	1.1783	0.0009
Travelled previously outside US	0.9034	0.4963	0.0687			
Class instruction						
Europe	2.0275**	0.6994	0.0037			
Central America	1.0638	0.6258	0.0891			
Hispanic	1.8297*	0.7234	0.0114			
Foreign language - Spanish	1.8149*	0.8713	0.0373			
Journal writing						
Education	-1.6993*	0.7583	0.0250			
Less than 21 years old				1.4769	0.8755	0.0916
Male				1.3737*	0.6639	0.0385
Hispanic	1.3319	0.7326	0.0691			
Travelled outside US beyond last 5 years	-1.3347	0.7424	0.0722			
Project presentation						
Business Administration	1.1831	0.7016	0.0917			
Company visits						
Europe	-2.2928**	0.7369	0.0019	-2.3608**	0.9165	0.0100
Central America				-1.9745*	0.8525	0.0206
Short-term 2- 4 weeks	-1.5630	0.9429	0.0974			
Business Administration	-2.0048**	0.7506	0.0076	-1.7037*	0.7592	0.0248
Hispanic	-1.5982	0.8235	0.0523			

Full time student	2.1011*	0.9617	0.0289			
Free time abroad						
Central America	1.3361*	0.6627	0.0438	2.3178**	0.8369	0.0056
Education	1.7028*	0.7057	0.0158			
GPA 2.51 - 3.00				-1.9385	1.1115	0.0812
GPA 3.01 - 3.50	1.7363	0.9585	0.0701			
GPA 3.51 - 4.00				-1.6321	0.9421	0.0832

Note: *** p ≤ 0.001, ** p ≤ 0.010, * p ≤ 0.050

Having participated in the study abroad course, students were asked to rank course components from which they have benefited. The post-trip results show that the Caucasians and the Hispanics benefited more from pre-trip orientation. Further, the males, and those below 21 years old (vs. 21-25 years old) benefitted more from journal writing. Interestingly, those who returned from Europe and Central America, and business majors benefitted less from company visits. When it comes to having free time abroad, those who returned from Central America reported having benefitted more, however, students with a GPA between 2.50 and 3.00 and between 3.50 and 4.00 (vs. GPA<2.50) benefitted less from it.

Concerns

Prior to the trip, students were also asked to rank any concerns they may have relating to the study abroad trip. Based on previous literature review (Bain & Yaklin, 2019; Hanada, 2019; Koernig, 2007; Manspeaker & Wallace, 2019; Medora & Roy, 2017; Neuliep & Ryan, 1998; Sachau et al., 2010), and certain characteristics unique to our student samples, the following nine areas of concern were constructed (see Figure 1):

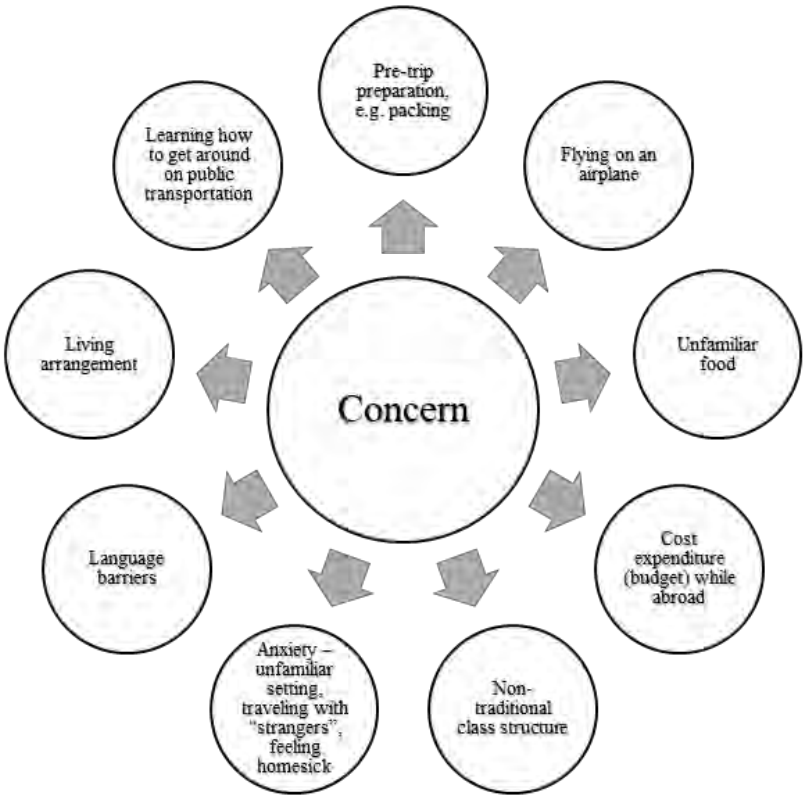

FIGURE (1): The Nine Areas of Concern

When it comes to pre-trip preparation such as packing, graduate students (vs. freshmen) and those with a GPA between 3.01 and 3.5 (vs. GPA<2.50) were more concerned, whereas the Hispanics (vs. African Americans) showed less such concern (see Table 5). However, the Hispanics and interestingly those who had previously travelled outside the U.S. (vs. those who had not) were more concerned about flying on the airplane. Among those who were less concerned about flying on the airplane were those who traveled to both Europe and Central America (vs. Asia), those with education majors (vs. arts & sciences), those who had to apply for a passport for the trip (vs. those who needed not do so), and those who had previously travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous 5 years (vs. those who traveled outside the U.S. within the previous 5 years). Interestingly, students who had to apply for a passport for the trip (vs. those who needed not do so) were more concerned about unfamiliar food, in contrast to students with a higher GPA between 2.5 and 3.5 (vs. GPA<2.50) who had less such concern. Moreover, the new passport applicants along with those who had travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous 5 years were more concerned about non-traditional class structure. Surprisingly, those with business majors, and participants who had previously travelled outside the U.S. (vs. those who had not) had more anxiety concerns (e.g., unfamiliar setting, traveling with

strangers, feeling homesick), whereas new passport applicants and those who had travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous five years had less such concern.

While those who were bound for Central America were more concerned about language barriers, those with business majors (vs. arts & sciences), the males, and the part-time workers (vs. full-time workers) were less concerned. Students who major in education or health sciences (vs. arts and sciences), and those who had travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous 5 years were more concerned about their living arrangement while abroad, whereas the Hispanics were less concerned. Participants who were less than 20 years old and those over 25 years old (vs. 20-25 years) were more concerned about getting around with public transportation, whereas graduate students, junior, and sophomore (vs. freshmen) were less concerned.

Having participated in the study abroad trip, students were asked to rank areas of concern they had if they were to do it again. The post-trip results show that students who returned from Central America, the married and the single were more concerned about pre-trip preparation, while part-time workers (vs. full-time workers) were less concerned in this regard. Interestingly, the single, the Spanish speakers and the English-only speakers (vs. German, French, and others) were more concerned about flying on an airplane, in contrast to those who were over 25 years old (vs. 21-25 years old), who had less such concern. When it comes to unfamiliar food, surprisingly, students who returned from Europe were more concerned, but those with education majors, and all classmen above freshmen and graduate students had less such concern. The American Indians, multi-racial, and Asians were also more concerned about cost or budget while abroad whereas the English-only speakers were less concerned.

TABLE (5): Results for Concerns

	Pre-trip			Post-trip		
	Estimate	**Std. Error**	**p-value**	**Estimate**	**Std. Error**	**p-value**
Pre-trip preparation						
Central America				1.3817	0.8392	0.0997
Graduate student	4.1047	2.2230	0.0648			
GPA 3.01 - 3.50	1.7206	1.0319	0.0954			
Married				17.1200***	0.7545	<0.0000
Single				16.3800***	0.4355	<0.0000
Hispanic	-1.5915*	0.7264	0.0285			
Part-time worker				-1.8713	0.9838	0.0572
Flying on an airplane						
Europe	-1.2130	0.6927	0.0799			
Central America	-1.4225*	0.6564	0.0302			
Education	-1.7315*	0.7155	0.0155			
More than 25 years old				-1.6097*	0.7855	0.0404
Single				2.5372*	1.1820	0.0318
Hispanic	1.1694	0.7025	0.0960			
Foreign language - None				1.8831*	0.8928	0.0349
Foreign language - Spanish				2.5430*	1.1714	0.0299
Previously travelled outside the U.S.	1.7235**	0.5299	0.0011			
New passport applicant	-1.1276*	0.5047	0.0255			
Travelled outside US beyond last 5 years	-1.5374*	0.7467	0.0395			
Unfamiliar food						
Europe				1.6332	0.9034	0.0706
Graduate student				-16.9000***	0.8489	<0.0000
Junior				-17.6100***	0.4809	<0.0000
Senior				-19.4300***	0.4513	<0.0000

Sophomore				-35.1300***	0.0000	<0.0000
Education				-1.9373*	0.8053	0.0161
GPA 2.51 - 3.00	-1.8326*	0.8823	0.0378			
GPA 3.01 - 3.50	-1.4773	0.7817	0.0588			
New passport applicant	1.0478*	0.5118	0.0406			
Cost expenditure (budget) while abroad						
American Indian, multi-racial, & Asian				1.4140	0.8415	0.0929
Foreign language - None				-2.2531*	1.0142	0.0263
Non-traditional class structure						
Central America				-1.4113	0.7843	0.0720
Graduate student				-16.4550***	0.7198	<0.0000
Junior				-15.7360***	0.5150	<0.0000
Senior				-16.0560***	0.4628	<0.0000
Less than 21 years old				1.8566	1.0396	0.0741
American Indian, multi-racial, & Asian				1.4746	0.8573	0.0854
Foreign language - None				-1.7841	0.9307	0.0553
New passport applicant	0.8912	0.5152	0.0837	1.0876	0.6271	0.0829
Travelled outside US beyond last 5 years	1.5685*	0.7234	0.0301			
Anxiety						
Central America				-1.8649*	0.8104	0.0214
Business Administration	1.7992**	0.6964	0.0098			
Education				-1.7323*	0.7600	0.0226
Male				1.6918**	0.6571	0.0100
White				1.3965	0.7534	0.0638
Full-time student				-2.3095*	0.9405	0.0141
Previously travelled outside the U.S	0.8795	0.4959	0.0761	1.2933*	0.6078	0.0334
New passport applicant	-1.4332**	0.5215	0.0060			
Travelled outside US beyond last 5 years	-2.7061**	0.8673	0.0018			
Language barriers						

Europe				-1.4638	0.8805	0.0964
Central America	1.7318**	0.6525	0.0080			
Business Administration	-1.2897	0.7466	0.0841			
Male	-1.2737*	0.5218	0.0146	-1.5939*	0.6473	0.0138
Single				-2.5074	1.3540	0.0640
Foreign language - Spanish				2.3732*	1.1923	0.0465
Part-time worker	-1.8344	0.9847	0.0625			
Living arrangement						
Education	1.4439*	0.7033	0.0401			
Health science	2.9805*	1.4124	0.0348			
Married				16.1700***	0.8071	<0.0000
Single				16.6100***	0.4804	<0.0000
Hispanic	-1.7107*	0.7255	0.0184			
Travelled outside US beyond last 5 years	2.0712*	0.8192	0.0115	3.0434*	1.3779	0.0272
Getting around on public transportation						
Graduate	-3.3717	1.8980	0.0757			
Junior	-1.8500	1.1210	0.0988			
Sophomore	-2.6395*	1.3460	0.0498			
Education				1.1651	0.6953	0.0938
Less than 21 years old	1.5055*	0.6563	0.0218			
More than 25 years old	1.2784	0.7528	0.0895			
Foreign language - None				-3.3230*	1.4260	0.0197
Foreign language - Spanish				-4.6820**	1.6000	0.0034

Note: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.010$, * $p \leq 0.050$

Students younger than 21 years old (vs. 21-25 years old), the American Indians, multi-racial, and Asians, and new passport applicants were more concerned about non-traditional class structure, whereas students from Central America, all upper classmen and graduate students, the English-only speakers were less concerned. The males, the Caucasians, and

interestingly students who had previously travelled outside the U.S. had more anxiety concern but those who returned from Central America, those with education majors, and full-time students had less anxiety concern. Surprisingly, the Spanish speakers had more concern regarding language barriers, whereas students from the Europe, the males, and the single had less concern about those communication barriers. The married and the single (vs. divorced and widowed), and those who had travelled outside the U.S. beyond the previous 5 years (vs. less than the previous 5 years) had more concern about living arrangements. Finally, students with education majors had more concern about getting around with public transportations, whereas the Spanish speakers and the English-only speakers showed less such concern

Conclusion

Limitations

This study is a preliminary and ongoing study, a bigger sample size will be more desirable. The participants of the post-trip survey were not necessarily the same respondents who participated in the pre-trip survey. Future study can include a measure of non-participating students to demonstrate the need for and the effectiveness of offering such programs. Future study may include other demographic variables used in previous literature such as household incomes (Nguyen et al., 2018; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Stroud, 2010), whether students live on campus, and the distance between the university and the student's home (Stroud, 2010).

Discussion

There have not been many studies that link the demographics of participants to their motivations, benefits derived from the experience, and concerns in the study abroad programs, let alone tying them to the learning components for the purpose of course improvement in the future. Our study aims to fill this gap. A few key findings are highlighted and discussed in the following.

The duration of the study abroad trip was found to impact the intercultural experience of the participants. Our pre-trip results showed that relative to those in the longer term (1-3 month) program, participants in the short-term program (2-4 weeks) were more motivated by their desire to experience culture in another country. Further, they expected to have a less enhanced professional experience from the study abroad, and to benefit less from company visits. Koernig (2007) pointed out that one of the students' main concerns is not having enough time to experience the culture of the host country.

Naturally, when time is limited, it is harder to experience culture fully and to schedule quality company visits. Upon returning from the trip, surprisingly, participants in the longer-term program (3-6 month) reported having a less enhanced cultural experience but a more enhanced personal experience. Our study is therefore partially congruent with other studies that found the longer the length of the program the greater the effect on the students' global perspective (Kehl & Morris, 2007; Zorn, 1996) or cultural impact (Dwyer & Peters, 2019). Thus, H_1 was partially supported.

According to Stroud (2010), gender affects students' intent on studying abroad. Women were 2.4 times more likely to travel than men in most studies including this one. Both our survey results have demonstrated that males were more motivated than females by a desire to experience culture in another country. In our post-trip survey, males also reported experiencing culture as a motivation that was more met by them than by females. Similar effects of studying abroad that leads to global-mindedness and intercultural competence have been confirmed in other studies (Anderson et al., 2006; Jackson, 2008). Further, both survey results showed that males were less concerned about language barriers. They also reported having benefitted more from journal writing though they had more post-trip anxiety concern than females. Being able to handle language barriers and overcome anxiety in unfamiliar settings, even learning to write journals certainly constitute part of their personal growth. Our results are in contrast to Anderson and Lawton (2015) who found that male students scored lower than females in motivation to travel for world enlightenment and personal growth. Thus, H_2 was not supported.

A study has shown that participants of study abroad were more inclined to receive significantly higher grades compared to non-participants (Peppas, 2005). It is therefore not surprising that our participants with a GPA above 2.5 were more motivated than those with a lower GPA by their major requirement to participate in the study abroad experience. The former also reported learning foreign business practices as a post-trip motivation that was met more by them than by those with a lower GPA. Moreover, those with a higher GPA reported having more of a post-trip enhanced academic experience than those with a lower GPA. This is consistent with a previous study that found students with high GPAs were more likely to study abroad to learn more about the world and increase their general knowledge (Hadis, 2005). Thus, H_3 was supported.

Finally, ethnicity is an interesting demographic variable to explore in cross-cultural studies such as the study abroad programs. Unfortunately, not many significant results on ethnicity have been reported in previous literature.

Stroud (2010) among others found weak to moderate correlations of race in influencing the students studying abroad. Our pre-trip results showed that all ethnic groups relative to the African Americans expected to have a more enhanced personal experience, with the Hispanics consistently reporting a more enhanced personal experience upon their return. Such results are supported by other similar studies that showed enhanced personal development and awareness among the retuning students (Milstein, 2005; Willard-Holt, 2001). Moreover, relative to the African Americans, the Caucasian Americans reported having experienced the culture of another country as the most met post-trip motivation. Our results also support research that demonstrated the Caucasians (monocultural) were more likely to accept cultural differences or become less ethnocentric after the trip (Anderson et al., 2006; Drews & Meyer, 1996; Shibata, 2010), in contrast to the Hispanics, the American Indians, multi-racial, and Asian participants (multicultural) cited a less enhanced cultural experience. This is supported by another study that found monocultural students, but not multicultural students, demonstrated an improved self-efficacy and cultural intelligence from their study abroad experience (Nguyen et al., 2018). Thus, H_4 was supported.

Understanding the motivations and expectations of the students will help the participating faculty to market to a diverse student population and anticipate successful participants. The pre-trip expectations and concerns expressed by participants can be duly identified and addressed during the pre-orientation sessions. The post trip results will help the participating faculty in their future course design and planning for the trip, and eventually in the quality improvements and success of study abroad programs offered by the educational institutions.

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